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### Mysticism in Tagore's *Gitanjali*: A *Rapprochement* of Eastern and Western Philosophy

**Abstract:** Tagore is regarded as one of the most fertile and comprehensive poets of the twentieth century irrigated by Eastern and Western philosophy. The paper attempts to compare and contrast Tagore's conception of God in his poem *Gitanjali* with the mystical and philosophical insights of renowned philosophers, transcendentalists and scientist like Plato, Spinoza, Sree Sankaracharya, St Thomas Aquinas, Meister Eckhart, Emerson and Albert Einstein and to establish the underlying *rapprochement* among them. It also tries to bring forth the parallels in Tagore's mysticism and that of Monism, Pantheism and Taoism.

**Keywords:** Mysticism, Monism, Pantheism, Taoism, Brahman

As an artist in the most comprehensive sense of the term, -a poet, dramatist, short story writer, musician, painter, critic, philosopher, educationist and patriot all rolled into one and irrigated by the Indian and Western arts, Tagore stands as one of the stalwarts of not only Indian literature but World literature. Being the first Indian and also the first non-European to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913, his global stature escalated profoundly. This pioneer, voyaging through the strange seas of godly experience was aided by his intellectual versatility, intuitive perception and his zest for life and knowledge. He fascinates with his

complexity, reflexivity, ceaseless and boundless exploration of the realms of diverse human experience. Tagore captivates us as a man of contrasts. He is a radical thinker with a scientific bent of mind that Albert Einstein paid tribute to. Being a realist, he refuses to be blindfolded by ideologies but, at the same time, he is also a willing traveller on the path of the fantastic and the mystical. Sometimes, in a desperate attempt to amalgamate the intriguing and seemingly disparate trends of his thoughts, Tagore is best defined as a ‘mystical rationalist’.

The entire poetic life of Tagore reflected what Carl Sandburg expressed in *The People, Yes* (2015), “the endless yearning of man for the Beyond” (285). The partition of Bengal in 1905 and the successive bereavements of his wife, Mrinalini Devi and two children stirred him. But since he would not “muddy the waters of his Muse with his personal grief,” his heart turned God-ward, and his verse became “the language of his communication of a higher love” (Kripalini 203). The poet of Nature and Man, came now to yearn for the love of God. The poet’s heart felt the thirst for far-away things, and he came to hear the call of the Great Beyond, the Flute-Player’s immaculate notes that incessantly flowed in the form of *Gitanjali*, a collection of one hundred and three poems. The celebrated Introduction by the Nobel Laureate, W. B. Yeats for the English version of *Gitanjali* is regarded as the greatest tribute by the West to East, wherein he said: “. . . These lyrics [*Gitanjali*] . . . full of subtlety of rhythm, of translatable delicacies of colour, of metrical invention---display in their thought a world I have dreamt of all my life long” (Tagore, *Gitanjali*).

Aurobindo lauds Tagore’s literary genius as: “. . . His work is a constant music of the over passing of the borders, a chant-filled realm in which the subtle sounds and lights of the truth of the spirit give new meanings to the finer subtleties of life” (321-323).

Joseph Alden Carpenter, the famous American composer, imparted music to several of these beautiful lyrics.

In *Gitanjali*, the poet is in tune with the Infinite. They stand as the rarest and marvellous union of simplicity and sublimity. The major strands that run through the rich fabric of the poem include the relationship with God and the human soul, God and Nature, Nature and the soul and the individual soul and humanity. These four themes mingle and overlap resulting in a devotional poetry as the world had never seen before. The major part of the poem is fraught with mystical glow. His influence includes the theism of Bhagavat Gita, the metaphysics of Vedas and Upanishads, the mysticism of the Bauls and the philosophical ideas in Vaishnavism and Sufism which are fused into the very spirit of the poem. Tagore was also influenced by Romantic poets particularly Shelley and Keats. Shelley's "the devotion for something afar", and his "we look before and after/ And pine for what is not" express mystical and transcendental thoughts which are not much different from that of Tagore's. In *An Introduction to Rabindranath Tagore*, V.S. Naravane opines:

All sides of human nature found full expression in his art. The noble idealism of the Upanishads, the compassion and wisdom of the Buddha, the rationalism of western thought, the love of the Vaishnavas, the humanism of Christ, the inwardness of the great mystic poets of all ages and countries everything had its place in Rabindranath's world view and his way of life. (9)

The mystical insights of Tagore find a true expression in *Gitanjali* which is highly regarded in the West by W.B Yeats and Ezra Pound and many other prominent writers. Mysticism is the teaching or belief that knowledge of God and of real truth may be obtained through meditation or spiritual insight independently of the reason and the senses. The word 'Mysticism' goes back to the Greek verb '*mueo*', literally meaning 'to shut or close the lips or eyes'. Hence, the mystic was considered as one having esoteric knowledge of divine things. Slowly the term assumed a meaning of closing the mind to the influences of all

external things in order to receive divine illumination. Mysticism is the spiritual quest for a union with the divine. The myriad forms of mysticism are found in all major religions. In Judaism, the foundations of mysticism were laid in the visions of the biblical prophets and were later developed in the 'Kabbala' and 'Hasidism'. Buddhism emphasizes meditation as a means of attaining 'Nirvana'. Hinduism with its goal of absorption of the soul in the All or Brahman is inherently predisposed to mystical experiences. Mysticism has appeared intermittently in Christianity, notably in the writings of St. Augustine (354-430) and St. Francis Assisi (1181-1226) and in the works of St. Thomas Aquinas(1225-1274), Meister Eckhart(1260-1328), St. Teresa of Avila(1515-1582), St. John of the Cross(1542-1591) and other saints.

William James, a renowned American philosopher and psychologist in his work *The Varieties of Religious Experience* explains the veracity of mystical experiences:

When we reach the subject of mysticism, you will undergo so deep an immersion into these exalted states of consciousness as to be wet all over, if I may so express myself;. . . You will then be convinced, I trust, that these states of consciousness of "union" form a perfectly definite class of experiences, of which the soul may occasionally partake, and which certain persons may live by in a deeper sense than they live by anything else with which they have acquaintance. (92)

Mystics are endowed with the faculty to understand and experience the meaning of what is mysterious, sacred secrets which are hidden from the eyes of the ordinary person and revealed only to spiritually enlightened mind. They are gifted with the ability to seek and achieve direct communion with God or the divine and to attain 'Ananda' or ecstasy. Mystical experiences lie beyond ordinary sensory perception. Metaphysics which is the attempt to conceive the world as a whole by means of thought has been developed by the union and

conflict of two different human impulses, the one urging men towards mysticism and the other urging them towards science. Some men have achieved greatness through one of these impulses alone. In the case of David Hume, the scientific temper outstands the other whereas William Blake shows a strong dislike to science but has a profound mystical insight. But the great men who have been philosophers have felt the need of both science and mysticism.

The universe comprises of myriad mysteries that can be apprehended only by humans with super-consciousness. Physicists to a smaller extent and mystics to a larger extent perform this task. Though they deal with different aspects of reality, the physicists explore levels of matter whereas mystics levels of mind. Physicists probe into matter with the help of sophisticated instruments and mystics look into consciousness with the help of meditation and contemplation.

The important characteristic of Eastern worldview is the awareness of the unity and mutual interrelations of all things. Everything is seen as the inseparable and inextricable parts of this cosmic whole. The Eastern traditions constantly refer to this ultimate, indivisible reality which manifests itself in all things and of which all things are parts. It is called 'Brahman' in Hinduism, 'Dharmakaya' in Buddhism and 'Tao' in Taoism. In other words, mystic illumination is the feeling of 'oneness' of all things, a consciousness similar to that of Pantheism in religion and that of Monism in philosophy. The mystic vision helps one to see the whole world with an eye of love and worship as Wordsworth visions in the "Ode : Intimations of Immortality" : "The earth and every common sight . . . / Apparell'd in celestial light" and as Blake sings in "Auguries of Innocence" :

To see a World in a Grain of Sand  
And a Heaven in a wild Flower  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand  
And Eternity in an hour. (1-4)

The belief that our abstract concept about separate things and events as realities of Nature is an illusion. According to Buddhism and Hinduism, this illusion is 'Avidya' or ignorance produced by 'Maya'. The main aim of Eastern mystical tradition is to attain the mystical heights through meditation. The Sanskrit term for meditation – 'Samadhi' - means 'mental equilibrium', as it is called in biology, "homeostasis" ie., a tensionless state. It refers to the balanced and tranquil state of mind which is necessary to experience the communion.

The mystic feels that the Supreme Soul or God is one and the same. But He assumes different forms. He dwells in man as well as in different forms of Nature. Thus the mystic believes not only that all Nature is alive but also that there is essential identity of Being between Man, Nature and God. As Dr S. Radhakrishnan opines in *The Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*:

“... Rabindranath advocates life in nature and in the open as the best means of spiritual progress, for in nature the religious eyes will see the infinite lying stretched in silence smiling repose. According to him the best way to derive inspiration is to lose oneself in the contemplation of nature. . .” (21)

A mystic is thoroughly tri-rational and anti-scientific in temper. He despises reason and intellect and the world of sense perception has no meaning for him. As Tagore puts forth his approach to Nature: “The language of Nature is the eternal language of creation. It penetrates reality to reach the deepest layers of our consciousness” (Tagore, “Introduction” 87).

The mystic experiences sudden 'flashes of illumination' in which he sees into the heart of things and realises the truth of the Divine animation of Nature. Communion with the soul of nature is possible for it is basically the same as the soul of man. A mystic is also convinced that human soul is eternal. Death for him is merely a transformation or the only



gateway to the eternal. Being a mystic, Tagore calls death “the last fulfilment of life” in *Gitanjali*. Rabindranath Tagore was gifted to discern the mysteries of the universe which could be attained only by a spiritually enlightened person. Tagore’s love for God and Nature made him enter the realm of mysticism. His mystical experiences are quite different from those of the experiences of saints. For Tagore, the union with God is attained through the active participation in everyday life and through selfless love while for saints the divine union is achieved through deep meditation and contemplation.

In *Gitanjali*, Tagore has the God-concept which is both immanent and transcendent. According to Tagore, the body of God is the world of men. Therefore, our love should go to every creature, the naked and the hungry, the sick and the stranger. Tagore vehemently opposes the view of the renunciation of the world. His advice to the worshippers is to leave singing and chanting, and seek God where the “tillers are tilling the hard ground” or “the path-makers breaking stones” (Canto XI. 5-6). God is not to be found in the temple or through the secluded life of an ascetic but through love and service to our fellow-men. For Tagore, humility is a virtue which the devotee must cultivate before he can enjoy the ineffable bliss which comes through union with the divine. Participation in the humble activities of daily life is essential for realising God. Thus Tagore is a *spiritual realist*. He has *humanised spiritualism*. He seeks union with God through the service to his fellow-men. That is why Tagore vehemently opposes the view of the renunciation of the world to attain God. He earnestly desires to realize the Creator in His creations. His perspective towards mysticism is not one of escapism rather his mysticism stays close to the spiritualization of earthly entities.

Tagore’s God is One and indivisible, but He objectifies Himself through the countless shapes and forms. He is the Universal Soul from which is derived both the soul of man and the soul of nature. The innumerable objects in Nature are nothing but the manifestations of



the Supreme. Tagore's God pervades man's body, heart and action. Hence, it is our duty to keep ourselves pure, simple and straight-forward and free of all evils so that our body, mind and heart is the 'temple of God' in the real sense of the phrase. Tagore realizes the relevance of purity of body and mind in the realization of God. He sings:

LIFE of my life, I shall ever try to keep my body  
pure, knowing that thy living touch is upon all my limbs.  
I shall ever try to keep all untruths out from  
my thoughts knowing that thou art that truth  
which has kindled the light of reason in my mind. (Canto IV. 1-5)

The God in *Gitanjali* is *omnipresent*. Every form of life, every form of Nature is an expression of the Divine. Though God is one, He manifests Himself in myriad shapes and forms- rain, thundering clouds, fragrant days. According to the poet, the same life that runs through his veins also runs through the veins of the countless objects of Nature. The poet believes in the inter-related identity of God, nature and man. He asks confidently:

HAVE you not heard his silent steps? He comes,  
comes, ever comes.

Every moment and every age, every day and  
every night he comes, comes, ever comes

Many a song have I sung in many a mood of  
.....

In the fragrant days of sunny April through the  
forest path he comes, comes, ever comes.

In the rainy gloom of July nights on the thundering  
chariot of clouds he comes, comes, ever comes. (Canto XLV. 1-5, 8-9)

Tagore's God in *Gitanjali* is omnipresent and pantheistic. Pantheism holds that God and the world are not distinct, and that everything in the world is part of God. This view is developed most fully in Spinoza, but is one to which almost all mystics are attracted. He presents his God in immanent as well as transcendent aspects. Tagore has often confessed that he has been greatly influenced by the Upanishads. Naturally, he believes that God is one and omnipresent. As Tagore points out in *Sadhana*, "The Upanishads say with great emphasis, know the one, the Soul. Only those of tranquil minds, and none else, can abide in joy, by realising within their souls the Being who manifests one essence in multiplicity of forms" (35-36).

In *Gitanjali*, similar to the tradition of Upanishad, the conception of God is essentially monistic. W. B. Yeats in his *Introduction to Gitanjali* writes of his deep appreciation of Tagore: " 'Every morning at three, I know for I have seen it' one said to me, 'he sits immovable in contemplation, for two hours does not awake from his reverie upon the nature of God' " (Paul and Prasad 75). A true nature mystic always takes pleasure in such contemplation. *Gitanjali* is the overflow of emotions purified in tranquility and divinity. Tagore was faced with a series of bereavements in the form of death and sickness of dear ones and as a result, a love for the other world and devotion began to flow through his poems. The lyrics of *Gitanjali* are the result of the drops of blood that ooze out from this agonised heart.

The inspiration to compose poetry like *Gitanjali* was his personal experience with God. Edward J Thompson, one of the biographers of Tagore wrote:

What matters in Tagore is his personal experience of God. Of the depth and sincerity of this experience, no one who has read *Gitanjali* can doubt. God is strangely close to his thought. He is often more theistic than any Western theist. God becomes more personalized for him, the Indian, in the most

intimate, individual fashion. . . I can only assume that he found it so in personal experience. (105)

The very opening line of *Gitanjali* “THOU has made me endless, such is thy pleasure” has the power to set the heart ablaze. It continues as follows:

This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again

and fillest it ever with fresh life

This little flute of reed thou has carried over

.....

At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart

loses its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable.

Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very

small hands of mine. Ages pass, and still thou

pourest, and still there is room to fill. (Canto I. 2-4, 7-11)

The idea inherent in this first canto is that God willed that man shall be immortal. Man’s hunger is infinite, and the Lord’s grace is equally infinite. This ‘frail vessel’ similar to Gerald Manley Hopkins’s ‘frail clay’ and also ‘foul clay’ is filled ever with fresh life by the grace of God. This ‘little flute’ can still breathe ‘melodies eternally new’ and can still transcend its human limitations and taste pure *ananda*. What is here finite is frail, little, limited, small yet the touch of the infinite makes it fresh, eternal, immortal, ineffable. This God is man’s friend and lover and protector. As the Nobel Laureate, Haldor Laxness wistfully writes:

What an enviable God, this God of Tagore; the great friend- the Beloved, the lotus Flower, the unknown man playing a lute in the boat yonder on the river!

... This is why a spiritual reality like Tagore’s probably shall remain only one

more eastern wonder to the western mind yet for a long time to come. (332-33)

Tagore's conception of God when compared and contrasted with that of philosophers and scientists like Plato, Spinoza, St Thomas Aquinas, Meister Eckhart, Sree Sankaracharya, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Albert Einstein proves to have an underlying thread of harmony.

Plato had regarded the natural world as a world of half-truths and imprecision. This Athenian philosopher who lived in the Classical period believed in God as Will Durant in his *The Story of Philosophy* opines:

Plato believes that a nation cannot be strong unless it believes in God. A mere cosmic force, or first cause, or *elan vital*, that was not a person, could hardly inspire hope, or devotion or sacrifice; it could not offer comfort to the hearts of the distressed, nor courage to embattled souls. But living God can do all this, and can stir or frighten the self-seeking individualist into some moderation of his greed. All the more so if to belief in God is added belief in personal immortality: the hope of another life gives us courage to meet our own death, and to bear with the death of our loved ones; we are twice armed if we fight with faith. ( 35)

For Plato, "God always geometrizes" ( Durant 39) bringing forth the idea that God and the universal laws of structure and operation are one and the same reality. Thus God, in the Platonic sense , is the Form of Forms or the "timeless, abstract, unchanging objects of the understanding".

Spinoza, though a Western philosopher, whose thoughts and vision are akin to those of Eastern philosophy, had the attitude to God which was not like that of Descartes or a Cartesian philosopher but based upon the order of Nature and God. In return for his devotion to Nature and to God, however, he did not suppose that either the one or the other should

condescend to take any particular interest in his own welfare. To expect such attention was to love selfishly as Spinoza mentions in the fifth book of *Ethics*: “He who truly loves God cannot endeavor that God should love him in return”. The occasional remarks of Spinoza recall those of the Spanish mystic St. John of the Cross and the German philosopher Novalis who once referred to Spinoza as “God intoxicated man”. Spinoza’s philosophy is mystical in its visionary character and Jewish in its spiritual obstinacy. To understand Spinoza’s concept of God is to appreciate his blend of Christian, mystical and Jewish thought.

Similarly, St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) who is also a great theologian and philosopher propounded the view that “God is known through all things and yet apart from all things; and He is known through knowledge and through ignorance” (Tomlin 329). Throughout ages, “the aim of scholasticism was to demonstrate the harmony and compatibility between Reason and Faith. What St. Thomas succeeded in doing was not merely to prove such compatibility but to codify all knowledge in the light of it” (Tomlin 336). According to Aquinas, the pursuit of wisdom is the most perfect, sublime, profitable and delightful of all pursuits. Aquinas did not complete his voluminous work *Summa Theologiae*, because of “his consciousness that no single book and no single man could attempt to embrace all the mysteries of nature and God” (Tomlin 337-38). The fourth book of St. Aquinas *Summa contra Gentiles* explains the three ways of knowing God: “by reason, by revelation and by intuition of things previously known only by revelation. However, his temperament seems to be more ratiocinate rather than mystical” (Russell 425).

Meister Eckhart, a German Dominican mystic (whom some would consider equal to Sree Sankaracharya) claims in unmistakable terms his identity with God. He declares, “My eye and God’s eye are one and the same, one in seeing, one in knowing, and one in loving” (Stace 224). His mystical insights are in tune with Sankaracharya’s ‘Advaita’ philosophy.

Sree Sankaracharya bases his whole philosophy on those passages of the Upanishads which proclaim that the individual soul is identical with Brahman, the Absolute. God, according to Tagore, is the all comprehensive One, the Ultimate or Supreme Reality, Supreme Soul, Eternal Spirit or Sachidananda. All these expressions point to the primacy of the spiritual and refer to the 'Advaitam'. To Tagore, 'Advaitam' is an all comprehensive unity in which diversities are reconciled in an inner perfection. The ultimate end of man, according to Tagore, is to find the One, which is in him, which is truth, which is his soul. It is the key with which he opens the gate of the spiritual world, the heavenly kingdom. The One in him is ever seeking for unity in knowledge, unity in love, unity in purpose of will. His highest joy is when he reaches the infinite and be united with Him. Tagore holds that the vision of the Supreme One in our own soul is a direct and immediate intuition. It is not based on any ratiocination or demonstration at all. He quotes in *Sadhana* the Upanishad saying, "This deity who is manifesting himself in the activities of the universe always dwells in the heart of man as the Supreme Soul" (30).

The dominant school of Vedanta represented by Sankara and his followers preach the resolution of the individual soul in the impersonal one as the highest state of mystical realization. In his essay *The Religion of Man*, Tagore himself refers to this school in the following words:

According to some interpretations of the Vedanta doctrine, Brahman is the absolute Truth, the impersonal It, in which there can be no distinction of this and that, the good and the evil, the beautiful and its opposite, which is only illusion or maya or the emanation of ego, having no other quality except its ineffable blissfulness in the eternal solitude of its consciousness. . . of its undivided unity with the Parabrahman. (127-28)

The mystic Aurobindo also asserts the ultimate absorption of the individual in an undivided unity. In clear, decisive words Plotinus, a classical philosopher proclaims the merger of man with the Supreme, or God i.e., the infinite energy or the invisible and mysterious power that pervades the whole universe.

The transcendentalist philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson who is also known as the ‘Sage of Concord’ points to a ‘personal God’ who reigns in the shrine of his heart. His spirituality first gets conception in his inner self and blossoms to its entirety through the extension to the outer self, an idea which is not much different from that of Tagore. For Emerson, God is to be found in his own heart. He called divine as ‘Over-Soul’ which is free from the constraints of reason and intellect and which Wordsworth referred as the ‘Soul of all the World’. In one of his poem collections *Poems of Youth and Early Manhood*, Emerson sings: “Lighthearted as a bird and live with God/ I find him in the bottom of my heart/ I hear continually his voice therein.” He spells out his major ideas on God as:

I conceive a man as always spoken to from behind and unable to turn his head and see the speaker. In all the millions who have heard the voice, none ever saw the face. As children in the play run behind each other, and seize one by the ears and make him walk before them, so is the spirit of our unseen pilot. That well-known voice speaks in all languages, governs all men, and none ever caught a glimpse of its form. If the man will exactly obey it, it will adopt him, so that he shall not any longer separate it from himself in his thought, he shall seem to be it, he shall be it. If he listens with insatiable ears, richer and greater wisdom is taught to him, the sound swells to a ravishing music, he is borne away as with a flood, he becomes careless of his food and of his house, he is the fool of ideas, and leads a heavenly life. But if his eye is set on the things to be done, and not on the truth that is still taught, and for the sake of



which the things are to be done, then the voice grows faint, and at last is but a humming in his ears. His health and greatness consist in his being the channel through which heaven flows to earth. (11)

Tagore is a radical thinker with a scientific bent of mind that Albert Einstein, the Promethean figure of our age paid tribute to. Tagore's God as Einstein's was not the God of most other men. Einstein believed in "Spinoza's God who reveals Himself in the harmony of all that exists, not in a God who concerns Himself with the fate and actions of men" (Clark 38). As a physicist who believed in God, his "God is subtle but he is not malicious" (Clark 38).

Much of Einstein's writing "gives the impression of belief in a God even more intangible and impersonal than a celestial machine-minder, running the universe with indisputable authority and expert touch"(Clark 38). Instead, as Tagore conceives, Einstein's God appears as,

the physical world itself with its infinitely marvellous structure operating at atomic level with the beauty of a craftsman's wristwatch and at stellar level with the majesty of a massive cyclotron. Einstein's God thus stood for an orderly system obeying rules which could be discovered by those who had the courage, the imagination and the persistence to go on searching for them. (Clark 38)

According to Einstein, our actual knowledge of the Nature is only imperfect and fragmentary so that actually the belief in the existence of basic all-embracing laws in Nature also rests on a sort of faith. Einstein strongly believed that "God does not play dice with the world" (Clark 38). As Tagore believed, Einstein was of the view that everyone who is seriously involved in the pursuit of science becomes convinced that a spirit is manifest in the laws of the universe- a spirit highly superior to that of man and one in the face on which we

with all our modest powers must feel humble. For Einstein , “a God who rewards and punishes is inconceivable to him for the simple reason that a man’s actions are determined by necessity, external and internal, so that in God’s eyes he cannot be responsible , any more than an inanimate object is responsible for the motions it undergoes” (Einstein 39). As a proponent of cosmic religion, Einstein did not believe in a life after death which stands as a contrast to that of Tagore who regarded death as a gateway to the eternal world. However, Tagore’s God is not one governing the universe from Olympian heights.

No Indian poet since the Vedic times has felt so intensely the presence of God behind the phenomena of nature, and it is just in this ‘nature mysticism’ that the originality of Tagore is to be found. Nature mysticism can be said to be the very core of the Upanishadic teachings which emphasize the identity of the spirit of man and the spirit of the universe. Tagore’s conception of nature is in concord with the doctrines of the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita* when he rejoices in the kinship between the spirit in all things and his own soul and the infinite spirit in the universe.

Tagore is one of the most fertile and comprehensive poets of the twentieth century irrigated by Western and Eastern Mysticism. His mystical vision has parallels with the notions of American Transcendentalists like Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman which in turn is similar to that of the Chinese philosopher, Lao-tse whose ‘creative quietism’ which Witter Bynner in his translation of Lao-tse’s *The Way of Life* calls “the fundamental sense commonly inherent in mankind, a common sense so profound in its simplicity that it has come to be called mysticism” (12). Tagore was very close to the philosophy of Taoism. The mysticism of Chinese philosophers like Lao-tse and Chuang-tse is more interesting than any other oriental writings. In the sacred texts of Taoism i.e. Lao-tse’s *Tao Te Ching* (*Tao Virtue Book*) and Chuang-tse’s *Chuang Tse* provide the mystical intuition that a dynamic universal force (called Tao by Lao-tse) united man and the universe.

According to Lao-tse, as expressed in chapter forty seven of *Tao Te Ching*, mystical vision induces in us an intuition as follows:

Without going outside his door, one understands all that takes place under the sky, without looking from his window, one sees the Tao of heaven, the farther that one goes out (from himself), the less he knows. Therefore, the sages got their knowledge without travelling, gave names to things without seeing them; and accomplished their ends without any purpose of doing so. (46)

Tagore carried out his ministry of love and beauty and creative harmony in a world that seemed to be more and more lost to the eternal values. Throughout his life, he refused to accept the facile heresy that the East and the West were irreconcilable opposites. He also believed that new life could emerge only through a creative fusion of the old and the new. Tagore felt that the West and the East had much to teach each other. By comparing and contrasting Tagore's conception of God with that of the Eastern and Western philosophers and thinkers, it mutually complements and completes each other rather than being contradictory.

As the poet of Nature and man, Tagore's yearning for the love of God finds expression in *Gitanjali*. However, the mysticism of Tagore as pointed out earlier, is the mysticism of the soul yearning for a deep inner communion with the Absolute, which is in him, which is his own transcendent self. His is the mysticism of the enlightened humanist who perceives simultaneously God, Nature and man combining them to form an integral vision of reality in the inner 'Santiniketan' of his heart. His is a personal religion of love rooted in the mystical experience of its various moods. Such a mystical communion with the Ultimate Reality pervading the inner and outer world produces a cosmic consciousness in the poet's mind. It produces intellectual enlightenment and emotional thrill in the poet and raises

his individual soul to a new realm of excitement of ecstasy, much higher than that of the ordinary joys of the mundane reality.

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